

*N. Waltham*  
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THE  
AGE OF GENIUS!

A  
SATIRE ON THE TIMES.

IN A  
POETICAL EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

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BY THOMAS BUSBY.

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AGE OF GENIUS!

SATURDAY ON THE TIMES





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THE  
AGE OF GENIUS!

AN  
EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

YOU, my *dear friend*, whom art and talents grace,  
Which only to your *principles* yield place;  
Who by your *own* know genius' *real* flame,  
And, in your *own*, enjoy a *well-earn'd* fame;  
*You*, list'ning to my *temporary* song, 5  
Shall judge, and tell me if I'm *right* or *wrong*.

WHEN our *grave* grandfires talk of those *rare times*,  
Ere *modern* follies sprung, or *modern* crimes;

B

When

When all were *chastely* honest, *greatly* good;  
 Untempted, or temptation still withstood; 10  
 When patriotism in *patriots* found support,  
 And Virtue at St. James's kept her *court*;  
 When nought but for the *public good* was done;  
 Ere kings believ'd the *many* made for *one*;  
 When viewing in their King the common weal, 15  
 The *many* felt for *one* a loyal zeal;  
 When ev'ry heart beat *Amor Patriæ*,  
 And Britain's *strength* was Britain's *liberty*;  
 Ere *lower* ranks were mingled with the *higher*,  
 Or trade to dissipation *dar'd* aspire; 20  
 Ere linsley-woolsley gowns were thrown aside,  
 To deck, in lace and lustring, *female pride*;  
 Ere *old* men wore their *hair*, when *young* ones *wigs*;  
 Ere *cits* kept country boxes, and their *gigs*;  
 When lords and ladies *honour'd* their degree, 25  
 All *things* and *men*, what *men* and *things* should be :  
 When you hear *this*; when also you reflect,  
 All times, in turn, partake the *same* respect;

That



That juſt like living poets, *preſent days*,  
 Whate'er their *merit*, know no *preſent praiſe*;  
 That, paſt and gone, like works of authors dead,  
 Times are extoll'd whoſe *worthies* wanted *bread*:  
 When you reflect on *this*, tho' *griev'd* the while,  
 The *folly* cannot chuſe but make you *ſmile*!

30

BUT yet, again, (diſtinction's line to draw)  
 Tho' *dotage* thus to preach, we know no law  
 Binds us to think *paſt* times *few* virtues had,  
 Or, *having* few, that *theſe* are not as *bad*.  
*Some* faults, *ſome* foibles, certainly *we* have;  
*Some* fools, *ſome* coxcombs—*here* and *there*, a knave.  
*Some* *few* erroneous notions *now* prevail:  
*Theſe* let us weigh, my friend, in Reaſon's ſcale.

35

40

THE times *have* been when *genius* was ſo rare,  
 The learn'd would *rev'rence*, and the ign'rant *ſtare*,  
 If beaming from above the bleſſing fell,  
 And bade ſome fav'rite happily excel:

45

The

The man with virtue and true genius fir'd,  
 Was prais'd by *all*, and by the wise *admir'd* ;  
 Beholding in the gift it's SACRED SOURCE,  
 All honour'd, cherish'd, and confests'd it's force : 50  
 From heav'n alone it came, and came to few,  
 Nor from the sterile root of *labour* grew.  
 Of genius *now* (blest age !) the *diff'rent* lot !  
 All *think* they have it—nay, who has it *not* ?  
 In *courts* it shines, in *senates*, and the *schools*, 55  
 And *clears* the world of *dunces* and of *fools* !  
 Spreads, flourishes, and favours unconfin'd ;  
 One *common* benefit to *all mankind* !  
 In *this* opinion young and *old* abide,  
 What genius *is*, is all they can't *decide*. 60  
 Some, at the most, a *knack* conceive it all ;  
 Or well to *write*, or well to *catch a ball*,  
 An *equal* object of their *admiration*,  
 As *sure* a title to their *approbation* :  
*These* undertake to prove it only *toil*, 65  
 Denying all *diversity* of *foil* ;



Nature, with *them*, has no distinction made,  
 And fruit *must* follow Application's spade:  
 While others, (and by much the *greater part*)  
 Tho' they allow it not *depends* on art, 70  
 By labour *still* aver it may be gain'd;  
 Or something *very similar* attain'd.  
 Hence, of *all* maxims, which more trite than *this*—  
 ' Study the more, if Nature is remiss?'  
 Guided by *this*, the million's led away; 75  
 Guided by *this*, hear what the million say!—

20  
 ' ART thou not blest with genius *labour free*?  
 ' By *labour* then, at least, a genius be;  
 ' *Practice makes perfect*—Nature *still* is kind,  
 ' If to her offers we're not *idly* blind. 80  
 ' Nature is *coy* but to be su'd with *art*;  
 ' Then be it *thine* to act the suitor's part.  
 ' Still as she *frowns*, more ardent court her *smile*,  
 ' And seek her *favours* at the hand of *Toil*.

Has

‘ Has she with *sparing* hand supplied thy *cup*? 85

‘ Pour in from *Learning*’s, then, and *fill it up*:

‘ The more thou add’st to what was giv’n before,

‘ Be sure in future, she will give the more;

‘ In shape of *Genius* will her blessings show’r;

‘ Shew what in *her*’s and what in *Learning*’s pow’r; 90

‘ Prove that to Knowledge Wit is still allied,

‘ That *Labour*’s fruit is never *long* denied,

‘ That learning *all* deficiencies supplies,

‘ And teaches e’en the *weakest* to be *wise*.

‘ Then *labour*—thus thou *full* amends shalt make 95

‘ For *natural* defects.’ O gross mistake!

From toil, I grant, some aid we may expect,

But ne’er shall conquer *natural* defect.

Strive as we *may*, endeavour all we *can*

To counter-act, and vary *Nature*’s plan, 100

Still, spite of *all*, she keeps her *sov’ reign* way,

Nor yields to *Art* the honour of her *sway*.

Nature to Art gave *birth*—and say, shall *she*

The *slave* commence of whom she caus’d to be?

’Gainst



'Gainst her *own wisdom* shall she prove a *tool*, 105

And mar her *purpose* to indulge a *fool*?

The bulk of Life's affairs ask no *great* parts,

And *little* or of *sciences* or *arts*:

Labour, mere *labour*, is the grand demand;

Some things the *head* must do, but more the *hand*. 110

The *humblest* tenement Content enjoys,

In *raising*, many labourers employs;

While *amplest* piles Ambition can erect,

Ask in *designing* but *one* architect.

'CAUSE most are shallow, say we *Nature* fails? 120

Her *wisdom*, rather say, as *much* prevails

Where her stream oozes thro' the *narrowest* souls,

As where in *fullest* tides her bounty rolls.

'Tis not she *sinks*, because she lifts not *all*;

She *seems* indeed, but *only* seems, to fall: 125

To *one*, *great* end diversifies creation,

Supports and governs by *subordination*;

Here

Here high, there low; now calm, and now a storm;  
 Various in *means*, in *purpose* uniform:  
 Each rule of Nature's an *unerring* rule, 130  
 And when she *makes*, she always *means* a fool.

WHAT if each age ten thousand *Pitts* produce,  
 And gives no *R*——s for common use?  
 Some *two* or *three* can chaunt the Cockpit note,  
 But Government *three hundred* wants to vote: 135  
 What's a whole Cabinet, tho' e'er so *wise*,  
 Devoid of *P*——s for *timely* lyes?

In this great town, (region of *worldly* cares!)  
 What *thousands* thrive by only vending wares!  
 While *many* a son of Genius, and of Science, 140  
 In *richest* merit finds a *poor* reliance!  
 See thro' the world the observation hold—  
 The way of *dulness* is the way of *gold*.  
 The reason's plain—all—craftsmen, 'squires, and kings—  
 Need more of *common* than *ingenious* things. 145

A poem



A poem, song, or picture, *now and then*,  
 May strike the *fancied taste* of *dullest* men:  
 But *vulgar lux'ries* come in *constant* play;  
*Dress and good-living* triumph ev'ry day.

SINCE then, of life's conveniencies, the *sum* 150  
 Must from *mere industry*, not *Genius*, come,  
 Dame Nature, in her *wisdom*, has thought fit,  
 To give to most a *plenteous lack of wit*;  
 To stint them to their necessary light,  
 Keep to it's *proper bound* their *mental* fight, 155  
 That, only seeing their own *narrow course*,  
 (As blinkers help to guide the packer's horse)  
 They may not to *eccentric objects* stray,  
 But keep the *beaten tenor* of their way.

DID *Genius* fall the lot of *ev'ry one*, 160  
 How wou'd the bus'ness of the world be done?  
 If *all* were wits, who'd wreath the poet's bays?  
*Originals*, who furbish up *old plays*?

HA

D

What

What H——ts pillage for us *Gallic scenes*?  
 And what become of all our *Magazines*?  
 All *first-rate artists*, who'd supply the town  
 With *striking likenesses* at *Half-a-crown*?  
 Our dramatists, all *Shesidans* and *Colmans*,  
 Our players, *Kings* and *Kembles*, *Popes* and *Holmans*;  
 Who shou'd enrich the stage with *Fontainbleaus*?  
 What D——s speak so well with *half a nose*?  
 Or if, in *music*, *Genius* favour'd all,  
 Who set the *yearly jingle* of *Vauxhall*?  
 To hotch-potch *poetry*, give *airs* hotch-potch,  
 Coin *English* jargon, and baptize it *Scotch*?  
 New set this month, it's fond composer's pride;  
 By the cloy'd public, next month, set aside.  
 All *Stanleys*, *Arnolds*, *Battishills*, and *Cooks*,  
 What shou'd we do for H——ns, and for H——ks?  
 Could all *compose*, what D——ys shou'd *compile*?  
 What D——es do *great things*, in a *little stile*;  
 Display their *tiny* parts in *alterations*,  
 New set old tunes, and spin out *variations*?



All parsons, *learned bishops*, who wou'd preach?  
 All *qualified*, who *condescend* to teach? 185  
 If all *great lawyers*, lifted to the bar,  
 What *lesser rogues* shou'd bid their neighbours jar?  
 Into their minds the *legal frenzy* pour;  
 Or, found fomented, still foment the more?  
 All at the top, the top who shall support? 190  
 Who drive the sheep up to the *fleecing* court?  
 If all *physicians*, who's to *mix* the drug?  
 What the grave face, *wise wig*, well-practis'd shrug,  
 If still no *pothecary* adds *his* part,  
 T'enforce the *recipe*, and reach the *heart*? 195  
 Say, what the use of *surest precepts* giv'n,  
 If still in *vain* the patient sighs—for *heav'n*?

EACH has his *part* in what his talents *suit*;  
*This* shou'd *design*, and *that* but *execute* :  
*This* sort the feed, by *those* the earth be till'd ; 200  
*That* give the plan, and *these* the structure build.

EACH of *one chain* is but a *diff'rent link*,  
 Whether his task to execute, or *think* :  
 Each in his office bears some *useful part* ;  
 And *toil's* as indispensable as *art*. 205  
 Pity all see not Nature's *plain design* ;  
 Not keep their station in the *mental line* :  
 By less'ning links the varying chain is bound,  
 In *mazy turnings* winds and winds around ;  
 Hence, *meeting*, least with greatest *will* compare, 210  
 Nor know how *many circles off* they are.  
 By force of application *all* will draw  
 Blessings from Nature against Nature's *law* ;  
 Still *toil* and *tease*, as, by downright assault,  
 They'd *make her mend*, by *punishing* her fault : 215  
 But *thus* attack'd, she *fortifies* her rules,  
 And fools, *still plodding*, grow the *duller* fools.

E'EN Pope, who *modestly* imputes to *care*,  
 The *charms* that in his verse shine *ev'ry where*,

Proves



Proves, in his very *compliment* to toil, 220

*Such flow'rs* cou'd only spring in *such a soil*.

O HAPPY Bard! Ah, how much *happier yet*,

Had but *due shades* oppos'd the *lights* of wit!

Hadst thou for *thine* the plan of *Nature* chose,

And shewn the *nettle* to commend the *rose*! 225

Just giv'n the *sample* to the *rule* you drew,

And been contented not to *over-do*!

Why by redundant toil are *plain things* forc'd,

And from their *own simplicity* divorc'd?

Whether the subject, reptiles, gods, or men, 230

Why *all things* blazon where you turn your pen?

To the *first lustre* see *all parts* aspire,

And own e'en *beauty*, *unreliev'd*, may tire.

THINK a whole year beams out *one scene of flow'rs*,

Warm suns, soft airs, and amaranthine bow'rs; 235

And say, if flow'rs, if sunshine, and soft airs,  
 And *all* the charms the *loveliest season* wears,  
 Can yield the transport of *returning spring*,  
 Shaking *new* fragrance from *fresh-scented* wing,  
 When Earth, reliev'd from storms and freezing skies, 240  
 Feels from her womb a *new creation* rise ;  
 When Summer follows with *maturing* sun,  
 And takes of Spring the *task* she had *begun* ;  
 When Autumn's pencil, *varying* still the scene,  
 Ripens the fruit, re-paints the *changing green* ; 245  
 When Winter, with a *rougher, bolder* hand,  
 Heaves the swell'd flood, or *whitens* o'er the land :  
 When *these* in Nature's *sapient* order roll ;  
 Oppos'd, tho' *join'd* ; tho' *sev'ral*, *one great whole* !  
 Strike the *charm'd* eye, and teach th' *enraptur'd* heart, 250  
 To feel what *circling seasons* can impart !

GREAT DRYDEN view! see Art not *rule*, but *aid* ;  
 The *objects* Nature's, Art's the *light and shade* :

See



See them in *due subordination* join ;  
 As that *strikes out*, this *perfect* the design. 255  
 Still as each thought supplies the *various* rhyme,  
 Th' *according* stile it's nature suits, and clime.  
 If it demand a *bright* and *burning* sun,  
 Their blazing course the *vivid numbers* run :  
 Would this but *dazzle*? Should less force inspire? 260  
*Less glowing language* sheds it milder fire:  
 Would it in cooler shade *more grace* receive?  
 A soft recess the *faint expressions* give :  
 Does it, *quite plain*, a *lowly station* ask?  
 The *homely line* performs it's *humble task* : 265  
 Would it more nat'ral in the *medium* flow?  
 The verse *accommodates*; nor *high*, nor *low* :  
 While, *noble*! it in *higher sphere* wou'd shine,  
 He elevates it in a *stile divine*!  
 See *Nature's pencil*, in the hand of *Art*, 270  
*Nature's own spirit* to the work impart,  
 And the *bold figures, living*! from the canvas start!

See Learning's *body* kindled all to *soul* !  
 See the bright flame of *Genius* wrap the *whole* !  
 And say, had *Nature* this great *soul* denied; 275  
 If *Toil* the *inspiration* had supplied ?

Most minds, by *Nature* bound to *such a line*,  
 Only within *that sphere* can ever shine :  
 Nay, even *there*, peep out in rays *so small*,  
 We cannot, *fairly*, say they shine at all. 280  
 Some, like the *Sun*, *whole worlds* are form'd to light ;  
 Shine *ev'ry where*, and *ev'ry where* are bright :  
 Others, if o'er their *boundaries* they *rove*,  
 Sink, and extinguishing, *mere meteors* prove.  
 For a short space *some* roll their *transient fire*, 285  
 Just kindle to a *flash*, and then—*expire* !  
 Some a *long course* in *Nature's medium* shine,  
 Nor yet to *deaden*, nor to *blaze*, incline.  
 These, *independent*, in *themselves* are bright ;  
 Those form'd but to *reflect another's light* : 290

Some,



Some, like fierce comets, *rapid* move, and *far* ;

Like them, again, returning *regular* ;

Relume their fire at *Relaxation's* fun,

And then again as *wide a circuit* run.

WHEN we a spark wou'd rouze to *active flame*, 295

We only need to *fan* and *feed* the fame :

Once rais'd, the more we heap the kindling pyre,

Sparks *thicker* rise, and *fiercer* flames aspire ;

Catch at each part, their growing vigour raise,

And spread, and burst into an *universal blaze* ! 300

Not so the *mind*—A *spark* found only *there*,

We *less* must heap, and with a *nicer* care :

The *mental* spark but such a pile will light,

Bear but *such chafing*, and but burn *so bright*.

The fuel *duly measur'd* to it's pow'r, 305

If *faintly glimm'ring*, may exist it's *hour* ;

Illumine all it's *little pyre* around,

And, by it's *own*, shew *kindred sparks* their bound.

F

But

But if, *ambitious*, it wou'd *spread*, (Behold !  
 Behold the fate of *little sparks* too bold !)  
*Stifled* by what it *vainly* strives to light,  
 It's rashness brings it's own *eternal night*.

Good Doctor Dormant, whom in youth we knew,  
 Had some *small spirit*, some *small Genius* too ;  
 And with *proportion'd learning* promis'd fair,  
 To do *some credit* to the past'ral care :  
 Nay, pow'rs beyond *most parsons* might have reach'd,  
 And kept *awake* his audience while he *preach'd* ;  
 Or, (greater latitude of praise to take)  
 Had preach'd as tho' he were *himself awake* :  
 But, lo ! with erudition *overcharg'd*,  
 And nothing but his *waist* and *wig* enlarg'd,  
 With *letter'd lumber*, heap'd and heap'd about,  
 Self-knowledge *quench'd*, knowledge of men *shut out* :  
 Nay, *Learning's self*, press'd down by it's own weight  
 Too close to kindle, or irradiate,

The



The spark that in *due time* had *somewhat* shone,  
 Instead of *brighter*, quite *obscure* is grown;  
 And for some judgment, spirit, and ideas,  
 Only a huge, *dead stock* of words appears. 330

AND now I hear some *pedants* say—‘ What, then,  
 ‘ Is *Genius* all that’s to distinguish men ?  
 ‘ Shall Wit o’er *Learning* dare to mount his seat ?  
 ‘ *Illit’rate* Wit the *sacred Sisters* greet ?’  
 No—Genius e’er so *great*, I still confess, 335  
 Can never know, *alone*, it’s happiness :  
 As flames unfed, must transiently expire,  
 So without *learning* must the *mental fire* :  
 Nay, as more bright, more general the flame,  
 More fuel must supply and feed the same ; 340  
 E’en so the *mind* the *wider* it expands,  
*More* knowledge for it’s *maintenance* demands.

GENIUS and Learning, in *each other* blest,  
 In him a *manly* strength, in her confess’d

That

That *pliant Modesty* which heightens beauty, 345  
 And adds to charms of *frame*, the grace of *duty*;  
 Which points, yet *delicately* points, the way;  
 So rules, by *yielding* she preserves her sway;  
 While Genius triumphs with a *gen'rous* pride,  
 And, while he's *guided*, seems to *lead* his guide— 350  
 Learning with Wit, thus *happily* combin'd,  
 Will, *must*, yield models of the *noblest* kind;  
 The parents by their *progeny* be known;  
 Their *blended* qualities *exalted* shewn:  
 Learning by *Wit* inspir'd, to Wit gives aid, 355  
 While Wisdom, *smiling*, owns the league she made.

WHERE is the man who learning wou'd *explode*?  
 We only reason 'gainst the *gen'ral* mode;  
 The dealing it to *geniuses* and *fools*,  
 By *equal* portions, and *unvaried* rules. 360

It's *present* influence, let us then survey;  
 See who it *aids*, and who it *leads astray*;

How



How oft but fills the gap of youthful years,  
 And then for *trade*, or *pleasure*, disappears :  
 Yet how more frequent holds up *human pride*, 365  
 And *follies*, nature, *unprovok'd*, wou'd *hide*.  
 Among the sons of *Lit'rature*, how *few*  
 Up to the *fountain-head* the stream pursue !  
 Or, to the fountain-head *pursuing*, yet  
 How *fewer* taste the *sense*, or feel the *wit* ! 370  
 How *many* with the *dregs* become unsound ?  
 (For where the spring so *clear* but dregs are found ?  
*Where* dregs, my friend, *more* plenteous found than here,  
 Tho' drawn by *you*, no spring is found so *clear*)  
 How *many*, with their *learning*, *error* drink, 375  
 And make the brink of *knowledge*, *folly's* brink ;  
 At *ev'ry draught* some wholesome thought *repress*,  
 And only suck in *pride* and *idleness* !

SOME are to barbarism so *strong* inclin'd  
 By *nature*, they can *never* be refin'd ; 380

Or arts, or letters, teach them *what you will*,  
 You only give to vice *new pow'rs and skill* :  
 Bound or to *frailty's*, or to *folly's* fide,  
 Or *vice*, or *folly*, still their conduct guide ;  
 While each accomplishment bestows the art, 385  
*Abler* to play the *fop's* or *villain's* part.  
 With *some small parts*, but more of *vulgar pride*,  
 (The *common basis* of each fault beside)  
 They not without *success* to study bend,  
 (If *that's* success which serves not *Virtue's* end) 390  
*New vices*, with each *new acquirement*, shew ;  
 Or as in *knowledge*, so in *pertness* grow ;  
 Bid *Confidence* break down each *decent fence*,  
 And *Learning* hold the torch to *Insolence*.  
 For *learning* heav'n cou'd never *these* design, 395  
 Since *worse* than vain, our efforts to *refine*.  
 Their *native*, gross deformity of soul,  
 (As *subterraneous vapours harmless* roll)  
 Beneath the veil of *ignorance* might lie  
*Unnotic'd*, nor offend th' *escaping eye*. 400

But



But, meant by *erudition* to be grac'd,  
And in the light of *lit'rature misplac'd*,  
Each fault's not only brought to *public view*,

But what *exposes magnifies* it too.

So when gross matter in the *earth* is pent,

405

Th' *exhaling* beams of Phœbus give it vent ;

Draw it from *darkness* to the *open day*,

(From where, *confin'd*, it *inoffensive* lay)

And as it issues from the teeming earth,

Not merely give the sulphur second birth,

410

But as it, fuming, hovers o'er the ground,

*Spread* it, by rarefaction, *all around*.

SOME boys, at *most*, seem *only* sent to school,

To compliment the *universal rule* ;

*Just* thro' a *certain course* of study run,

415

*Just* to return to where they *first begun* :

Acquire a *little* with a *deal* of pain,

For bus'ness to *resign* it all again :

Just

Just as their *sisters*, in their *maiden lives*,  
Learn *music*—to forget it when they're *wives*. 420

BEHOLD them, tolerable scholars made,  
Throw by their *books* to make a way for *trade*:  
At *certain age*, see them of *course* begin  
To *let out* learning, to let commerce *in*:  
Till from *all* lit'rature's attractions wean'd, 425  
And losing e'en the *little* they had glean'd,  
In spite of *all* their Greek, and all the *praise*  
Acquir'd by *misconstruing* Latin plays,  
They turn out just as wise, and just as bright,  
As those who've only learn'd to *read* and *write*. 430

AGAT the goldsmith, when he first left school,  
Could translate *Virgil*, and was *no small fool*:  
Nay, was so good a *Grecian*, that, 'tis said,  
Homer with *decent fluency* he read.  
But now with *other things* that *head* is fill'd, 435  
Than who stole *Helen*, or who *HeEtor* kill'd;

The



The *narrow* cell but for *one* tenant made,  
 Could not contain both *lit'rature* and *trade*.  
 Trade's *skilful hand* soon therefore op'd a *door*  
 For Learning's *quickly-disappearing* store; 440  
 Drew from his head what knowledge it might hold,  
*New furnish'd*, and *trepann'd*, the skull with *gold*.  
 Now *Traffic* holds the seat where *Learning* sat,  
 And now a *diamond casket* is that *pate*:  
 Where Homer shot but an *ideal* blaze, 445  
 Now *real* brilliants dart *congenial* rays:  
 Where gold in *golden verse* cou'd only *flow*,  
 There *sterling gold* supplies it's *solid* glow:  
 No more a place *there Greece* or *Troy* maintain,  
 No longer *burden* his now *alter'd* brain; 450  
 If *any Troy*, *Troy-weight* now bears the sway;  
 And *Greece*, that *conquer'd* *Troy*, to gold gives way.

THESE a *small few*!—The *greater, wiser* part,  
 Display their *talents* in a *bolder* start!

H

To

To *brighter* objects than *dull commerce* turn; 455  
 For *nobler* wreaths than *Cræsus*' dare to burn!  
 Retain their learning, and, besure, forget  
 Their *bus'ness*, lest the *world* forget their *wit*:  
 'Mongst *Guildhall's* patriots, or *Coachmaker's* smarts,  
 Unwind their *learning*, and display their *parts*. 460  
 No matter whether trade goes ill or well;  
 Enough for them, that they in *prate* excel!  
 And, strange to say! no few of modern failures  
 Originate at *Paul's*, or *Merchant-Taylor's*.

*Cits*, *scholars* now and *rhetoricians* grown, 465  
 Claim more than *ancient titles* for their own.  
 Once, all their care to be well soak'd and fed;  
 The *belly fill'd*, still *empty* went the *head*:  
*Careless* of *praise* at council each took part;  
 Nor got, the day before, his speech by *heart*. 470  
 Cool, if not *rational*, he *spoke his say*; —  
 And *equal orators* bore *equal sway*.



No thirst of letter'd reputation yet  
 Had e'en begot th' *idea* of *city-wit* ;  
 No brawling knew they loud as at the bar ; 475  
 No blows *uncivil* bred a *civil-war* :  
 Each talk'd and *dox'd* in turn, and that was all ;  
 No *pens* and *ink* yet flew about the *Hall* :  
 No neighbour to despoil his neighbour fought,  
 But all departed with the *wigs* they brought ; 480  
 No heads furcharg'd in *rash dispute* then mix'd,  
 Like *Shrovetide cocks* on leaden basis fix'd ;  
 In *weight of belly* each his ballast found,  
 And, *light at top*, erectly kept his ground.

BUT this *no more* !—We must not now, alack ! 485  
 Seek the decorum of a cent'ry back :  
 All *learned* now, and consequently *wits*,  
 Fall *cureless* into strong-conceited fits ;  
 For liberty, and *dear diurnal fame*,  
 Rush to debate with more than patriot flame : 490

To

To Council call'd, so furiously engage,  
They scarce at *table* shew a greater rage !

At *Merchant-Taylor's* bred, Hardwareman cries—

‘ Shall we than men of *Paul's* be deem'd less wise ?’

Or, bred at *Paul's*—‘ Shall we in knowledge yield, 495

‘ And give to *Merchant-Taylor's* men the field ?—

‘ Here ! where's my gown, lamp, paper, ink, and pen ?

‘ Sleep is for *private*, not for *public*, men :

‘ To my *dear country* I'll this night devote,

‘ To-morrow's speech indite, and get by rote.’ 500

By his wife question'd why he keeps from bed—

‘ *England's salvation*, child, is in my head !

‘ How we may rise, her *Genius* whispers still ;

‘ But *all* depends upon my care and skill :

‘ *Britannia calls!* and I must do her will.’ 505

So when poor Crispin, crazy for the praise

Of *pulpit* eloquence, to preach essays ;

His 'prentice clerk ; his *cobling-stool* his stage ;

Flies to the fields with *tabernacle* rage !

With



With Rowland's skill erects the orbs of fight, 510  
 Or turns them, *ravish'd!* on the *inward light!*  
 Forgets Will's shoulders are but flesh and bone,  
 Or thinks at home he's *hammering* on his *stone*;  
 Now faith, *all-saving faith*, proclaims aloud!  
 Now deals damnation on the trembling crowd! 515  
 Ask'd why for *preaching* he deserts his *stall*,  
 (Bred at Moorfields, or Tot'nam) hear him bawl,  
 ' Because as how I feels I has a *call!*'

SAY *moderns* what they will, we still shall find  
 All knowledge but the *vesture* to the mind; 520  
 That, howe'er fine the *cloth*, or rich the *lace*,  
 No *blockhead's wear* will ever give it *grace*:  
 While Genius! e'er so *coarsely* clad, still shews  
 A *manner!* and does *credit* to his *cloaths*.  
 But as the mob no *nice* distinctions make, 525  
 Exterior *glare* for *Quality* mistake,  
 While *Quality herself*, in plain array,  
 Passes *unnotic'd* thro' the public way;

Since only *Taste* can ever draw the line,  
 'Tween where the *trappings*, where the *manners* shine; 530  
 Where from *within*, no rays the *Graces* shoot,  
 Where *Elegance* but asks a *better suit*,  
 So few discern the *insuperable* fence,  
 'Tween *only ignorance* and—*want of sense*.  
 Who're deeply *learned*, *must* be deeply *wise*, 535  
 Wisdom in *theory*, not *practice*, lies:  
 Who *know* the right, are *wise*, e'en in the *wrong*;  
 Tho' weak their *conduct*, still their *judgment* strong.  
 Who *little* know; that little e'er so well  
 Employ'd, each o'er-charg'd blockhead shall excel 540  
 His boldest, *happiest* effort: and by shewing  
 The difference between *doing* and but *knowing*,  
 Secure the plaudits due to *native merit*,  
 And *seize* the palm which *Genius* shou'd inherit.

SOME we *both* know, who, train'd in Folly's walk, 545  
 Blunder thro' life, and while they're *stumbling*, talk

of



Of *rectitude*; and place all *human reason*  
 In words *so join'd*, things done in *such a season*;  
 In knowing right from wrong, tho' all their life  
 Is with that knowledge *one continual strife*: 550  
 Their *doctrines* tell how easy 'tis to *preach*,  
 Their *lives* how hard to *practise* what they *teach*.

- ' Who *know* the right, can *do* the right at *will*;
- ' *Knowledge* the pow'r, the virtue and the skill.
- ' Who can *return*, have *privilege* to *stray*; 555
- ' Nor do they *err* who *know* the better way.
- ' To *know's* the *sense*—they're *wise* who *wisdom see*—
- ' To *know* what's right, is in the right to *be*!

AND is it then enough we *wisdom view*?  
 Is to *distinguish* all we have to do? 560  
 Will merely *separating* wrong from right,  
 Teach to *refrain* from that, in this *delight*?  
 Is it enough we *hear* but Reason's voice?  
 No *judgment* necessary to *direct* our choice?

No

No *grace*, no *sense*, no *talents* wanting still, 565  
 To *do*, as well as *understand* her will?  
 Merely the good and ill to *justly paint*,  
 Distinguishes the *preacher*, not the *saint* :  
 To know *true* wit from *false*, and *only* know it,  
 May form the *critic*, but ne'er made a *poet*. 570

WHEN to *confirm* his *virtue* and his *knowledge*,  
 His *unspoil'd* son Sir Tradewell sent to *college*,  
 And found, at his *return*, his education  
 But *pedantry*, and *taste for dissipation*,  
 We could not *censors* of his wit commence, 575  
 'Twas only *ignorance*, not *want of sense*;  
 The Knight, old-fashion'd, bred in those *plain days*,  
 When *lust of pudding* banish'd *lust of praise*;  
 When *He* was master of the noblest feat,  
 Who at a *turtle-feast* the most cou'd eat ; 580  
 When Dulness held at Guildhall *quiet sway*,  
 Or only rattled there on *Lord May'r's Day* ;

Ere



Ere honest, *fame-deluded* cits aspired  
 To *rhet'ric*, and by *Woodfall's* praise were fir'd ;  
 Ere Nonsense *perk'd* herself in *classic* stays, 585  
 And broke the *lace* in *stretching* for the *bays* :  
 The Knight, home-bred, and still without the *polish*  
 By which *wise* *moderns* ancient *rust* abolish ;  
 Untaught, untrain'd in *Erudition's* schools,  
 Stranger to *colleges*, and *college-rules* ; 590  
 Who scarce had heard of *science* or *degree*,  
 And knew no rule—except the *Rule of Three*—  
 Thinking at *Oxford* *Wisdom* reign'd *alone*,  
 (For how should *he* know *Dulness* shar'd the throne ?)  
 Sent his son there to seek her for his guide, 595  
 And fail'd—but fail'd with *reason* on his side.

But when his *Lordship*, with more knowledge stor'd  
 Than deem'd by *peers* becoming in a *lord* ;  
 Knows what is *true nobility*—it's *end*—  
 Whence honours *sprung*—on what they *still depend*— 600

—That  
 When

That, Liberty and Virtue it's support,  
 No spot yields sweeter incense than a *court*;  
 That *once* uncherish'd by their *sun-like* rays,  
 None droop so sudden as the *titled* bays—  
 When my Lord, taught in *this*, knows well the right 605  
 From wrong, yet errs in *Education's* spite:  
 When *such* a lord instructs his rising heir,  
 With *high-born* honours, *meanest* stains to wear;  
 To *boast* that height which but a *sound* supports,  
*Disdain* a friendship where *mere merit* courts; 610  
 To bear in mind that he's a *Noble Lord*!  
 Born by untitled worth to be *ador'd*  
 At *humble distance*—to avoid, not greet,  
 Nor *see* her, shou'd he meet her in the *street*;  
 But turn his back on her *plebeian* band— 615  
 Yet take a *villain gamester* by the hand;  
 Be 'bove th' approaches of the *saucy poor*,  
 Unless first qualified—as pimp, or whore—  
 Yet on occasion too, stoop *e'er so low*,  
 If with the *lordly* view to *make them so*— 620

When



When thus my *lord* instructs his *heir* to run  
 The course of *guilt*, ere *manhood's* is begun ;  
 To drink, to rake, seduce, and throw the dice,  
 With ev'ry *other* fashionable vice ;  
 To make his claim to his *estate* more clear, 625  
 To all his *follies* makes him too the heir ;  
 Acts *wilfully* in Reason's *contradiction* ;  
 Not only *errs*, but *errs* 'gainst *self-conviction* ;  
 Nor claims the *want of knowledge* for defence—  
 What is it—tell me—but the *want of sense* ? 630

SURVEY the times, you'll find the *dullest* elves  
 Have still the *best opinion* of themselves :  
 Tho' void of understanding, as of *wit*,  
 In *blest self-conceit* they're happy yet ;  
 That *succedaneum* all defects supplies ; 635  
 With common sense and *that*, they all are *wise* :  
 Nor *only* wise—Conceit provides them *wit* ;  
 At council aids my *lord*, as well as *cit* ;

By

By Cit, nor Lord, nor Parliament, nor Hall,  
*Monopoliz'd*—but still enjoy'd by *all*. 640  
*Ev'ry* profession feels alike it's aid,  
 And *sons of rhet'ric* spring from *sons of trade*:  
 All *now* too bright for *Traffic's* occupations,  
 Rush from their *own*, and seize the *upper* stations:  
 By dint of *confidence*, or dint of *gold*, 645  
 Usurp the heights *Ability* should hold:  
 While Merit *once dethron'd*, they keep her down;  
 And, howe'er ill it fits them, wear the crown.

Tho' long, long fled the time since bold Pretence  
 First with his *strong, invulnerable* fence, 650  
 Guarded *fond Inclination* 'gainst th' attack  
 Of *searching Diffidence*, (still free to rack  
 The breast of Genius; to inflict those pains,  
 Reserv'd, alas! for all who're curst with brains;  
 Those *poignant* wounds which *scrup'lous* merit feels, 655  
 Which scarce the world's *just commendation* heals;)

Tho'



Tho' long, *long* gone the day since *Dulness* knew  
 (If e'er she did) the *pangs* which still accrue  
 From *self-critique*—yet never, *sure*, till *now*,  
 Did Confidence such *ample field* allow 670  
 To Vanity—Once in his own *small way*  
 To be the first, and bear *mechanic* sway,  
 Compass'd the *craftsman's* wish; nor did he strive  
 By any but his *native* pow'rs, to thrive:  
 Now Emulation wild, and *past all bound*, 675  
 Soars to the *skies*, *disdainful* of the ground;  
 While all (for *foreign fame* outrageous grown)  
 Would mount on *any* pinions but their own.  
 The Cooper scans the *planets*, knows their scope,  
 Bends *pliant nature* as he bends a *hoop*; 680  
 Gallantly gives to *Venus Saturn's* moons,  
 And proves by *gravity* we raise balloons!  
 The Carpenter, turn'd architect, *designs*!  
 S—y harangues; Dunces commence Divines!  
 Th' Apothecary makes *Castalian* doses! 685  
 And Madan turns Musician, and *composes*!

As some *peculiar* whim each coxcomb draws  
 Aside, so diff'rent *accidents* the cause :  
*Unconscious*, these at first are led astray ;  
 Those, of themselves ambitious, start away ! 690  
 Some later catch this fever of conceit,  
 Others in *infancy* imbibe it's heat.

WHAT parent but admires his children's babble,  
 And sense and humour hears in all they gabble ?  
 Between papa and company hemm'd in, 695  
 How Dicky's wit provokes the circling grin !  
 And if 'mongst all the rattle of a day,  
 One random repartee shou'd break it's way,  
 Which the child neither means nor understands,  
 What laughing plaudits ! and what clap of hands ! 700  
 How oft the table bids the joke resound !  
 The standing bye-word of a whole year round !

Does he, in some mere, wanton whimsy, snatch  
 The pencil, and around the wainscot scratch—

‘ What



‘ What *rising genius* dawns in *ev’ry stroke* ! 705

‘ *A painter born* !—See *here*—see *there* !—*Look, look* !

‘ Let him go on, and ‘gad ! ‘tis *all* so well,

‘ No artist *living* but he shall *excel*.

‘ Shou’d he proceed, and take to *Humour’s* school,

‘ To what he’ll be, your *Rowlandson’s* a fool ; 710

‘ Or if for *portraits*, soon shall *Romney* yield,

‘ And even *Gainsborough* give up the field :

‘ For *history* ? Still shall he top the *best* ;

‘ To *Reynolds’* force join all the *truth* of *West* !

OR does he draw the bow across the kit, 715

And, *chance-directed*, some known passage hit,

Enough ! ‘ The boy has a *surprizing ear* !

‘ Has he *not*, spouse ?’—‘ Indeed he *has*, my dear !

‘ What may we not expect from *such a son* ?’—

‘ At least a *Cramer*, or a *Salomon* ! 720

‘ A master he shall have, whate’er the *cost* ;

‘ A downright *sin* such *genius* shou’d be *lost* !

PERHAPS

PERHAPS grown up, (his earlier years all spent  
 In those vile tricks which speak a vicious bent  
 In *nature*; and by which we all foresee  
 By what the *boy* is, what the *man* will be;) 725  
 Perhaps, tho' *mean* in *parts*, for trade too *proud*,  
 (In *pride* as well as *cunning* 'bove the *crowd*)  
 He bends to *study*; and, thro' want of time,  
 But *now* and *then* repeats a former crime: 730  
 (While at his heart vice *still* retains it's *root*,  
 And but retires more *vigorous* to shoot,  
 When *rip'ning* years shall all it's strength display  
 Full-grown, nor *shrinking* from the eye of day)  
 Perhaps, (for Dulness is to *Tail* allied, 735  
 As *Craft* to Dulness, or as *both* to *Pride*;)   
 Perhaps he labours, and as fierce a zeal  
 For *virtue*, as for *learning*, seems to feel:  
 Ne'er from his *books*, but, plodding *day* and *night*,  
 (As wond'rous *good*, as he is wond'rous *bright*) 740  
 Makes his *dup'd* father think now all is right:

Who



Who, *simple* man! unknowing *Nature's* rules,  
 And how she *qualifies* her *choicest* fools;  
 Who not amongst the *brightest* wits himself,  
 Confounds with wits each *pert*, each *artful* elf; 745  
 Sees *wisdom* in the *knave*, and *first-rate* parts,  
 Where *wiser* men see only *meanest* arts;  
 Finds *Genius* where but *Av'rice's* talons lurk,  
 By *Knav'ry* sharp'ned for *Disbonour's* work—  
 ——*Knav'ry*! which wise men hate, the dull *adore*, 750  
 Comprizing *all the fool*, and *something more*:  
 Vile, abject *Knav'ry*! ever on the watch  
 For what by *meanest* methods he may catch;  
 Whom he may best *surprize*, whose wit *defeat*,  
 (For *none* so keen but whom a *knave* shall *cheat*) 755  
 Whose *bonied* cell he safely shall deprive  
 Of it's *best sweets*, and leave a *ruin'd* hive:  
 Whose *loosen'd* nest shall offer to repair,  
 And keep together with a *guardian* care;  
*Friend-like*, restore the *feathers* that are *flown*, 760  
 While, *Lawyer-like*, he's *feathering* his own——

His father, *worse* than ign'rant *here*, nay even  
 Deeming this Knave's *Genius*, thinking Heaven  
 Has *blest* him with a son whose *sprightly* pranks  
 Speak *brilliant* talents, and demand his thanks, 765  
 For some *great*, *due* return, employs his search—  
*What?*—Dick shall be a—*pillar of the Church.*

HENCE, and from other causes *not more* wise,  
 The place of *Wisdom* many a *knave* supplies :  
 Hence groan the arts beneath an *over-stock*; 770  
 Hence science feels the *weight* of many a *block* :  
 Hence daily those are *taught* t'assume the *pallet*,  
 Whose minds, *self-led*, had rose but to the *mallet*.  
 Hence by themselves, *some* politicians made,  
 Whom wiser Nature only meant for *trade* : 775  
 Hence cowards by commissions rank with braves ;  
 While *fools*, made *Lawyers*, think they rise to *Knaves* :  
 Hence *authors*, with nor wit, nor sense, their *own* ;  
*Critics* with brains of *lead*, and hearts of *stone* :

Hence



Hence Nature's *great decorum* is annoy'd,  
 Hence half her *wisdom*, in *effect*, destroy'd:  
 And, by admitting each *pretending fool*,  
 Arts, arms, religion, turn'd to *ridicule*!

780

O FRIEND! whose ear I have detain'd *too long*;

Whose judgment bids me *tremble* for my song!

785

You, at whose bar I have the Age arraign'd,

(And, tho' in *rhime*, yet *feelingly* complain'd)

Say, am I right? or is my subject feign'd?

Is *letter'd Dulness* still for *Dulness known*?

Is *Genius* rais'd to *Reputation's* throne?

790

Are *highest posts* to *wisest heads* assign'd,

The *low* to talents of an *humbler kind*?

Are *blockheads* in their *native walks* content?

Is *Merit* cherish'd by *Encouragement*?

Say *this*, obedient I each word *retract*,

795

*Renounce* my sentiments, and yield to *fact*.—

But if you think with *me*, with *me* confess,

Folly but *more* herself in *Wisdom's dress*;

That

That *fools* in *fewest words* find *best disguise*,  
 And, *wise in silence*, may seem *really wise*;  
 But if, in spite of *Nature*, spite of *Fate*,  
 They will be *busy*, and they will be *great*;  
 Will *dare* to heights *beyond* their stretch of thought,  
 Will *preach* and *teach* what first they shou'd be *taught*;  
 If, lost to all the *little sense* they *have*,  
 They will exhibit *more* than *Nature* gave;  
 Will, *rusting* from their *sphere*, to heights arise,  
 By *Reason* held as *Sacred to the Wise*;  
 Then, joining *me*, convince the *erring elves*,  
 The more they'd *raise*, the more they *sink* themselves;  
 Yes—tell each *coxcomb*—tell him to his face,  
 The fool's *best knowledge* is to *know his place*!



— F I N I S . —